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## BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

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The five hundred and ninety-fifth meeting of the Club was held at the Rembrandt Hotel, London, on 16th January, 1962.

Chairman: CAPTAIN C. R. S. PITMAN

Members present, 19; Associate Members (Overseas), 2; Guests 7; Total 28.

### Some recordings of bird voice

Mr. Jeffery Boswall, Producer, of the B.B.C. Natural History Unit, played and commented upon some fifty recordings of sounds, nearly all vocal and some mechanical, made by birds from different zoogeographical regions, the recordings having been made by twenty-five recordists.

The reproductions played during the first part of the programme served to explain the various functions of the sounds made by birds—the territorial and mate-attracting value of “song”; the sub-song, alarm calls, injury cries, contact notes, “conversation” between adult and young, the echo-location “clicks” of Low’s Swiftlet (*Collocalia lowi*) recorded in the caves of Sarawak and the call of the Honey-guide, *Indicator indicator*.

In the second part the learning abilities of birds were well demonstrated by examples of vocal mimicry among wild birds and some showing the accurate reproduction of sounds achieved by certain captive “talking” birds such as the parrots (including the Budgerigar) and the mynah *Gracula religiosa*.

Lastly Mr. Boswall dealt with the possibility that birds may sing not only because it is biologically advantageous to do so, but also as a genuine, if limited, sense of musical expression. Reproductions of unison song, duetting and a variety of other types of expression were played.

Some discussion followed upon the programme and brought to an end a very interesting and enjoyable evening.

### Jacanas and other birds perching on Hippo

by C. W. BENSON

Received 23rd June, 1961

With reference to the notes in *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.*, 81, 1961 : 85–86, I regret that attention was not drawn to Verheyen’s “Monographie Ethologique de l’Hippopotame” (*Inst. Parcs. Nat. Congo Belge*, 1954),

based on work in the Albert National Park. On pages 53–54 Verheyen records no fewer than fourteen species perching on hippo, the Hammerkop (*Scopus umbretta*) and Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*) apparently both doing so while fishing.

Footnote:— R. Meinertzhagen in *The Birds of Arabia* (1954), p. 471 writes under Crab Plovers: "On Mafia Island I have seen them perched on the backs of basking hippopotami who were themselves asleep in seawater on a coral reef."

## A new name for *Estrilda astrild angolensis* Reichenow

by MELVIN A. TRAYLOR

Received 26th June, 1961

In his revision of the Estrildinae, Delacour (1943, *Zoologica*, 28: 69–86) failed to note that *Estrilda astrild angolensis* Reichenow (1902, *Orn. Monatsb.*, 10: 173) is preoccupied by *Estrilda a. angolensis* (*Fringilla angolensis* Linnaeus, 1758, *Syst. Nat.*, ed. 10, 1: 182) when *Uraeginthus* is united with *Estrilda*. For those who follow Delacour's generic revision, a new name is necessary for *E. a. angolensis* Reichenow, and I propose:

*Estrilda astrild malanje* nom. nov.

for *Estrilda astrild angolensis* Reichenow, 1902, preoccupied by *Estrilda angolensis angolensis* (*Fringilla angolensis* Linnaeus, 1758).

## Notes on the taxonomy of the Indigo Birds

by C. M. N. WHITE

Received 3rd May, 1961

The Indigo Birds are parasitic weavers, sometimes placed in the genus *Hypochoera*, but better included in the genus *Vidua* since their female and non breeding male plumages are very similar to those of other species of *Vidua*. The breeding males are of uniform dark colour varying from matt blackish purple to glossy purple, blue or green with a metallic lustre. The taxonomy of the Indigo Birds and the number of species has always been the subject of much doubt. Sclater (1930) arranged them in five species; Grant and Praed (1949) recognised eight species; Chapin (1954) lists five as occurring or likely to occur in the Congo but adds that there may only be three; Wolters (1960) discusses the possibility of only two species. Whatever the number of species, the uncertainty of how to distinguish females and non breeding males is even greater than the separation of males. Only Grant and Praed (1955) claim that their males are associated with distinguishable females. Characters used to distinguish breeding males are the colour and degree of the metallic gloss, colour of flight feathers, and colour of bill and feet. These characters have been used either separately or in various combinations. The present note arises primarily from an investigation of the position in Central Africa but considers data from other parts of Africa. About 170 breeding males and 40 females from South and Central Africa and Tanganyika were available through the kindness of the Transvaal Museum and the National Museum, Bulawayo to whom I am greatly indebted for the loan of material. The date is analysed firstly by geographical areas.